A Commitment to Common Educational Values

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Since October 7, students, faculty, staff, and administration have come together as members of an educational institution to share deep concern about the ongoing violence in Palestine and Israel. According to the estimates of the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of May 3, there are approximately 34,622 Palestinian deaths, 1.7 million internally displaced persons in Gaza, 1,462 Israeli deaths, and 133 Israeli hostages remaining in Gaza.

Those expressions have involved many different practices of protest. Some have involved demonstrations against the killing in Gaza; some have involved letters and lectures about antisemitism; some have involved vigils, naming that Israeli hostages are still imprisoned. In this moment they involve protest encampments bringing attention to the plight of Gazans.

Middlebury has a historic tradition of global educational partnerships and is concerned about education everywhere. Through thoughtful dialogues between many administrators and students, we have identified the following common educational values.

We are a community that comes together often with focus and passion. Of course, members of the community disagree about many things. While this document does not in any way reflect the totality of our opinions, which vary widely, it does reflect where we feel we can come together.

We are always willing to engage in thoughtful and productive discussions with students, offering opportunities for all to learn.

We share the value that each person has a right to pursue an education peacefully and without harm.

We call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the violence.

We condemn the destruction and debilitation of educational institutions in the region and the increasing lack of access to education because of the violence. At their best, institutions of higher learning offer societies the tools for resolving the politics of our lives through nonviolent means. Education is also our best means of transforming discriminatory beliefs. We are committed to working with our students, faculty, and staff to proactively confront antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian, anti-Israeli, and anti-Arab discrimination, and hatred on the basis of national or ethnic origin.

We condemn unequivocally the killing of all innocent civilians in Gaza and Israel, where no civil society, including educational institutions, can continue in the midst of such destruction. Palestinians and Israelis cannot learn in an environment torn by war.

We share the value of transparency in investing and financial communication.

Middlebury regularly and openly shares information about our investments through the inclusion of a Student Government Association (SGA) student appointment on the Investment Committee, called the Student Liaison to Endowment. We are open to giving access beyond the Student Liaison to Endowment to expand the conversation. We also meet regularly with the Student Investment Committee (SIC) and the Research & Investment in Sustainable Equity (RISE). Together we will continue these practices. We invite student participation in open discussions about how our endowment works.

Trustees regularly meet with students about issues of common concern. Beginning this May and throughout the next year, they look forward to sitting down with students to discuss investment practices and will create institutional pathways in order to do so regularly.

Currently, Middlebury is not invested in arms or arms manufacturers. We resolve to talk with trustees about sustaining and codifying our investment strategy of not investing in armaments. We will also share the details of this commitment and provide regular updates.

Following the Middlebury tradition of regular conversations between students and trustees, we will discuss and debate openly the complex questions involved in managing an endowment.

We share the value of educational exchange and creating educational possibilities for those who are at risk or who are displaced.

Following Middlebury's tradition of creating hospitable educational environments for those affected by violence, together we will explore avenues to host all students in the region displaced by war and violence. We appreciate the encampment's focus on the displacement of Gazan students.

Together we will explore ways in which Middlebury can continue its support of organizations working in the region to foster the well-being of all, so that educational institutions can once again thrive.

Together we will support NGOs in the region like World Central Kitchen, where Middlebury students have already collaborated across divides to address food insecurity due to violence.

We share the value of celebrating Middlebury students.

We are committed to a safe and joyful graduation where everyone and their families can participate.

President Laurie L. Patton and The Middlebury Administration

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